

quart cupful of the water seems to neutralize somewhat its dangerous qualities and make a refreshing drink more nourishing than gruel."

The Cahuillas sometimes baked pinole in little cakes or biscuits. "Either way chia is used, it is very good, has a pleasant, nutty flavor, and is exceedingly wholesome." In early summer, sixty years ago on Coachella Valley, which today is famed for its date groves and Palm Springs resorters, Dr. Barrows found in every Indian home the ollas being filled with chia seeds, as "throughout the cooler hours of the day and evening there is ever a woman grinding at her mill."

Twenty years later a visitor to this same desert country found little use then made of wild foods, of which chia was once the "great stand-by." But J. Smeaton Chase, writing of his 1918 trip in *California Desert Trails*, occasionally saw on "old housewifely crone seated on the ground and embracing with outstretched legs the wooden mortar in which she pounds out the family flour; or creeping about among the brush, beating with bat of palm-fibre the *chia* seeds into her bowl-basket."

The Indian has been crowded from his water holes. His trees have been cut down for white man's use and his wild pastures taken for white man's fields. Now he buys white man's flour and beans and coffee. But until very recent times, some families came back to ancestor-haunted desert camps to gather wild dates or mesquite beans or piñon nuts in nearby mountains — and chia seeds. One such mecca is Thousand Palms Canyon, now long the home of Paul Wilhelm, poet and writer of desert lore. During his first year at the oasis he subsisted as the Indians had before him on the bounty of the desert. Chia seeds he mixed with mesquite beans and wild buckwheat and thyme, grinding them on a stone he found at an ancient campsite and cooking them thin on hot stones, pouring over them wild honey. (Chia flowers themselves yield a fine white honey.) For a drink he mixed chia seeds with water and honey, pronouncing it healthful and "delightfully suggestive of cinnamon and lemon."

Forty-six years ago, Mary Beal, now a nationally known authority on Mojave Desert flora, began her desert life as an invalid on the old Van Dyke ranch on the Mojave River, through the efforts of John Burroughs and John Muir. Her later flower hunting trips into desert mountains were rugged. Seeing her slight figure weighed down with notebooks and camera equipment, Judge T. S. Van


Dyke passed on a "going light" tip from his Indian friends. He declared he could walk farther on a few spoonfuls of chia, which he collected for pinole, than on pounds of any other food. Mary ground her chia, mixed it with wheat germ and moistened it with just enough water to form dollar sized cakes half an inch thick. One of these cakes, with a few "bread dates," an orange or grapefruit and a lemon, comprised her food supply for a day's hard climb over rough boulders and through thorny undergrowth.

At stores, in the 1890's, chia brought six to eight dollars a pound. In 1910 it still was easily obtainable at southern California drugstores, where it was kept especially for Mexican customers who used it for both food and medicinal beverages and poultices. But recently a man wrote to 27 stores before finding one with a stock of chia seeds, priced at 75 cents a pound, minimum five pounds. The cost sometimes is higher than this, depending on the season and source of supply. Some of it, sold as far west as Tucson, comes from Texas.

If chia were more generally available today, it might be appreciated and relished as much as it was through the earlier centuries of our Western history.

Even though chia is difficult to find now, people widely scattered through the Southwest are using it. One desert hostess tops her hot rolls with chia seeds instead of poppy or sesame. Another serves a chia desert like an ambrosial gelatine — but it contains no gelatine. She adds a "judicious" amount of water to chia, enough lemon juice for tang, a little honey. After a few hours' chilling she has a dish that mystifies and delights every guest.

Developing my own chia delicacies, I've gone back to the Indian mill as the best seed grinder. I use a small black lava metate I found at the edge of a dry wash in a remote desert basin, and a white granite mano from another ancient camp many miles from water or present habitation. If a spirit haunts these stones, as I use them here by another desert oasis, I know it is a good spirit — a survival in time of the prayers of an Indian woman for her brave's good journey. . . .

And when I follow lonely trails across black desert mesas, sometimes it seems the mirage-quivered air half reveals shadowy forms ahead . . . there they go, a band of lithe and sun brown men, to trade with river tribes or to outwit the wild big-horn sheep — and each with his little skin pouch of chia, safeguard for the hungry miles. 



Seagoing NATIONAL MONUMENT

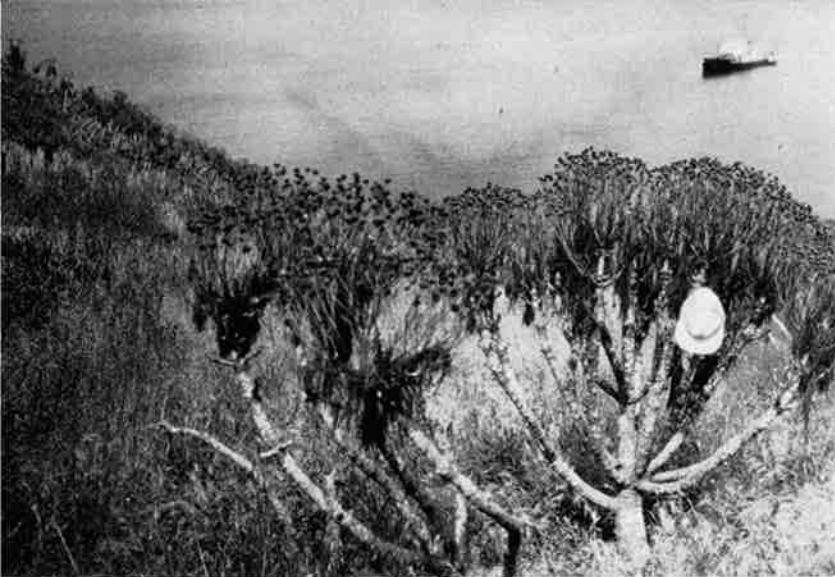
Weldon F. Heald

CHANNEL ISLANDS National Monument is within view along miles of the southern California coast — but is one of the least known of the 176 units of our widespread National Park System. Most landlubbers have never heard of it; the few visitors are mostly yachtsmen, deep-sea fishermen, and an occasional party of campers. Yet

it is a unique and fascinating area of rugged, austere beauty practically at our doorstep, and like no other national park or monument in the United States.

A presidential proclamation established the seagoing monument in 1938 to preserve the special scientific values—geological, biological—of Ana-

On Santa Barbara in the Channel Islands National Monument, seals and sea elephants hold this beach of the north shore. The four elephant seals in the picture may be distinguished by their larger size (lower right). (National Park Service photograph by Rose)



capa and Santa Barbara, smallest of the eight Channel Islands which lie offshore in the Pacific, south and west of Los Angeles. The monument's two parts total 42 square miles, almost every land and water feature holding something of uncommon interest.

Like the others of the Channel group, Anacapa and Santa Barbara are the summits of submerged mountain ranges once connected with the mainland—mountain-tops showing fine examples of ancient vulcanism, deposition, and sea erosion, and containing a wealth of fossils, from marine invertebrates to Pleistocene elephants and trees. In some places three distinct elevated beaches are clearly defined by terraces along the high cliffs. Both islands are honeycombed with caves gnawed out through centuries by the ceaseless surf. Of flowering plants native to them more than eighty are known; of animals and birds, thirty; sixteen kinds of land mollusks infest them. Anacapa has kitchen middens, shellmounds, and other evidence that Indians lived there. But perhaps the three most outstanding features of Channel Islands National Monument are the amazing numbers of nesting water birds; the numerous rookeries of



◀ The struggle of an ancient island plant, the giant coreopsis or "tree sunflower," to survive the domestic rabbit introduced apparently during World War II, is being aided in every feasible way by Park Service biologists. Their aim is to restore these islands as far as possible to their aboriginal state. This is the "Grizzly Giant" in 1950 and in 1954. (NPS photos)

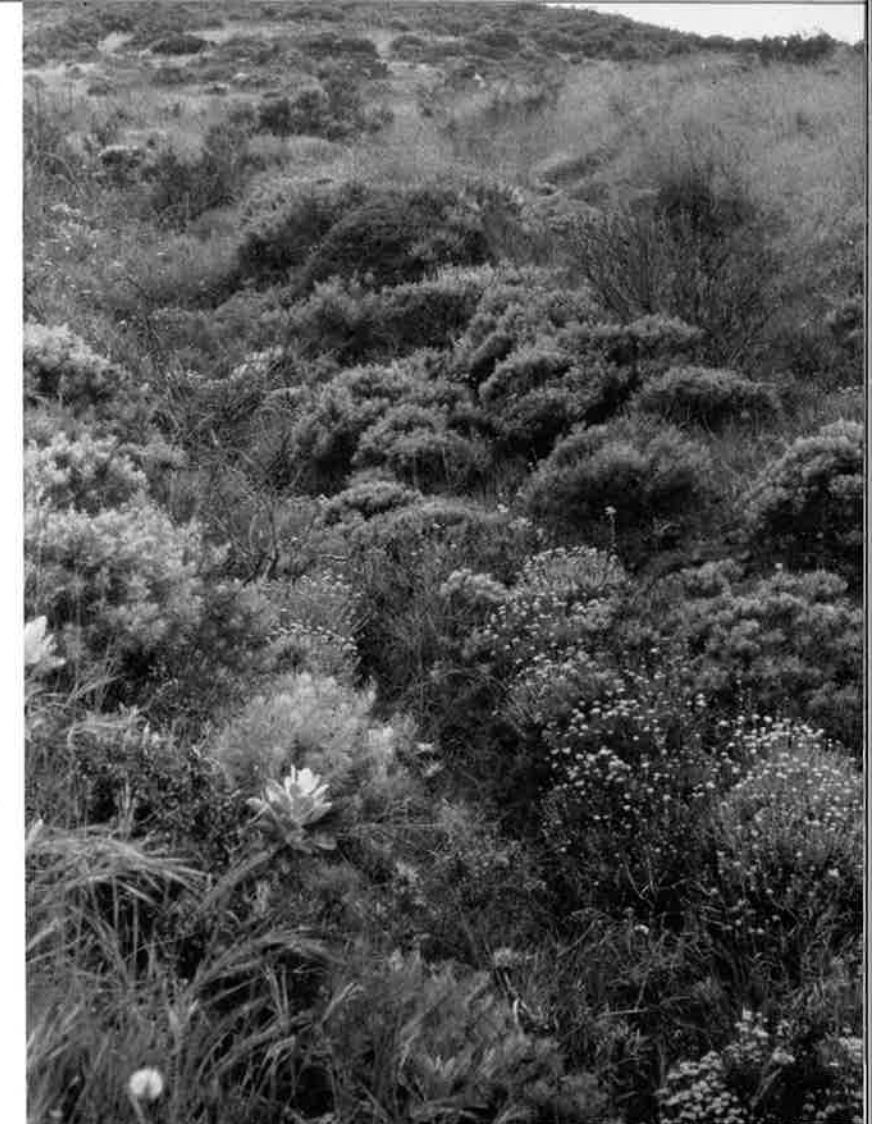


Sea lions swim unafraid near the landing area on Santa Barbara. (NPS photo)

seals, sea lions, and sea elephants; and the teeming marine life along the shores and in the surrounding waters.

Anacapa is the most easterly of the four islands strung along in line south of the city of Santa Barbara, and is 12 miles from Point Hueneme, near Oxnard. Actually three small islands divided by narrow, shallow channels, Anacapa is 5.5 miles long all told, makes a half mile at its widest, and rears its west end 980 feet into the fog. The western and middle sections are uninhabited, but on the eastern island are the buildings of Anacapa Light Station, with the white, cylindrical lighthouse standing on the easternmost tip, 277 feet above the ocean. The lighthouse reservation is not a part of the national monument.

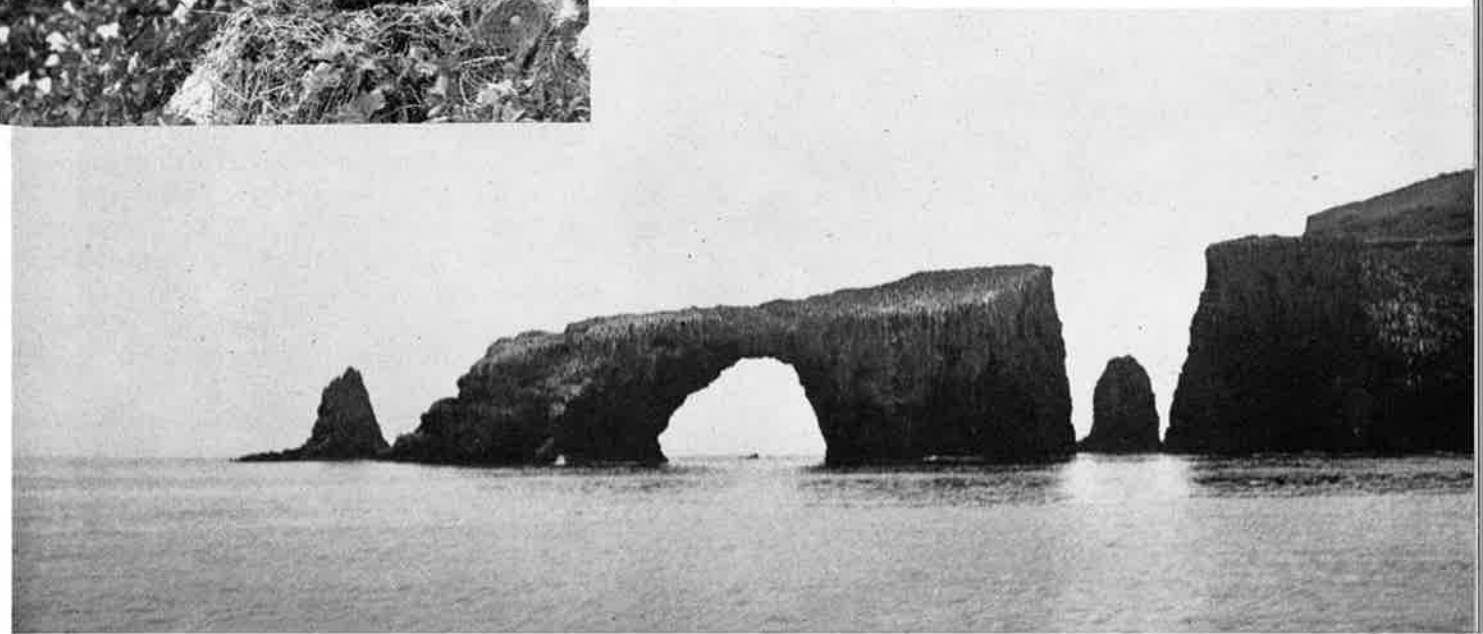
Abrupt slopes and almost perpendicular cliffs give fogbound, windswept Anacapa a barren, rugged look. A baffling thing is that it never shows the same face from two points of view—it has been called variously "Ever-changing" and "Deception" island. The eastern end presents a great tilted mesa supported by cliffs rising from the sea. Jutting out is an isolated section pierced by a huge arch over the water. Officially Arch Rock, this is



▲ Lush native vegetation on the West Anacapa bird refuge—untouched by rabbits. (National Park Service)

◀ Conspicuous in the Monument's large sea bird population is the California brown pelican (NPS photo) which nests

ψ in 2,000 pairs on Cabrillo Arches piercing the cliffs of Anacapa's eastern tip. (Weldon F. Heald)



There are several other anchorages along the shores of Anacapa and a small boat can land anywhere. The best place from which to explore the largest island is a small protected cove on the north side of the west end. The coast here is a maze of caves eaten into the rock and one could probably cross the island through underground passages. Although the steep slopes are apparently treeless, at the heads of ravines are small groves of toyon, island oak, and cherry, species not found on the mainland. It is one of nature's marvels of adaptation that such trees could survive for thousands of years on this tiny isolated island. The

Both Anacapa and Santa Barbara were for many years used as sheep ranches. Overgrazing had the disastrous effects on native vegetation, animal and bird life, and greatly accelerated soil erosion. Furthermore, domestic cats abandoned by sheep herders multiplied and preyed constantly on nesting birds. Rabbits introduced from the mainland also became a pest on Santa Barbara. Since the Park Service assumed jurisdiction, however, every effort has been made to exterminate the destructive intruders and protect native vegetation and wildlife so that nature can restore these unique islands to their original condition. Much progress has been made and the visitor to the Channel Islands National Monument today can begin to visualize how these sea-gift fragments of California looked before the coming of man—red or white.

STORY BEGINS NEXT PAGE ➤

